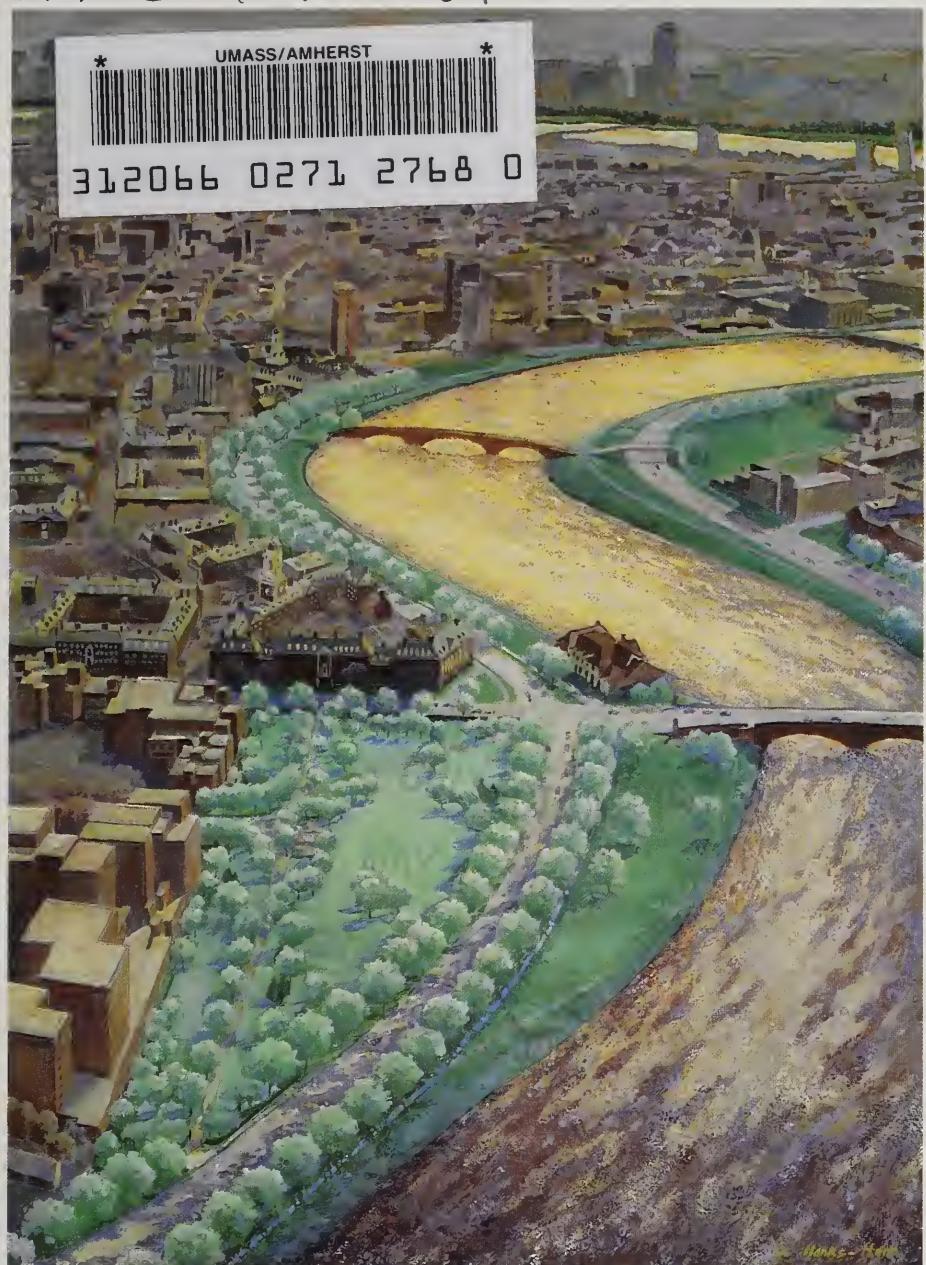


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JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY PARK

Dedicated by the People of Massachusetts to the Memory of President Kennedy

May 29, 1987

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The History of the Park

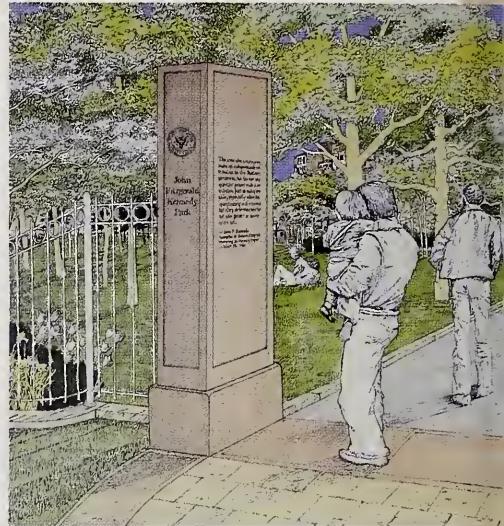
Now open to the public, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park is part of the Metropolitan District Commission's Charles River Reservation. That Reservation includes the Charles River, the Esplanade and Hatch Shell, miles of grassy riverbank in Boston and Cambridge, dozens of tot lots, pools, jogging and bike paths, as well as Storrow Drive, Memorial Drive and Soldiers Field Road.

One hundred years ago, this magnificent urban park did not exist. Instead, the area consisted of mudflats and poorly drained areas. Over time, the Commission constructed dams and parkland, and parkways to tie the open-space and recreational facilities together.

Today, the Charles River Reservation is one of the most beautiful and utilized urban parks in the nation.

In many ways, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park shares in this "rags to riches" story. Until 1976, much of the five-acre site was part of a larger parcel that served as a car barn for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and as a dark, muddy parking lot for visitors to Harvard Square. In 1976, the Legislature approved a plan to sell some of the property and apply several million dollars worth of the proceeds to build a public park that would serve as a memorial to President Kennedy. By 1983, with these proceeds in hand, the Commission moved to turn five oil-covered, barren acres into a park.

Metropolitan District Commissioner William J. Geary first convened a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) that included Caroline Kennedy, representatives from twenty neighborhood groups, the City of Cambridge, and institutions abutting or affected by the park. These people worked with Commission engineers and landscape architects to help design plans for a passive, grass and tree-oriented park that emphasized the public, accessible nature of the acreage. The group also decided that the park should be connected to the Harvard Square area



with a pedestrian corridor, indelibly casting it as a public park.

The Commission in consultation with the CAC selected Carol R. Johnson & Associates of Cambridge, Massachusetts as the landscape architect. A concept was developed where quotations from the speeches of President John F. Kennedy would be included in the park. Caroline Kennedy selected the quotations and also requested that moving water be part of a living memorial to her father. Under the direction of the Commission, Carol R. Johnson & Associates designed the granite fountain and gateway pillars to fulfill this request. The agency awarded the construction contract to the J. F. White Company. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held on November 4, 1985, and, on schedule, the park was completed and formally dedicated on May 29, 1987.

The materials for John Fitzgerald Kennedy Park are indigenous to New England. The granite stones were mined in Connecticut, New Hampshire and Massachusetts quarries; cut in New Hampshire; and assembled by Massachusetts and Rhode Island artisans. The color "Presidential Blue" was chosen as the inscription color. The ironwork was completely fabricated in Massachusetts. Plant material was selected for its hardiness and durability.

Species of trees selected for the park include: Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Horse Chestnut, Sweet Birch, Shagbark Hickory, Yellowwood, American Beech, Green Ash, Honeylocust, Sweetgum, Tulip Tree, Tupelo, Sourwood, Sargent Cherry, White Oak, Red Oak, Scarlet Oak, English Oak, Eastern Red Cedar, White Pine, Austrian Pine, Carolina Hemlock, Shadblow, Redbud, Flowering Dogwood, Kousa Dogwood, Yoshino Cherry, and Japanese Tree Lilac. To identify the park clearly as an MDC property, surrounding much of the park is a style of fence, bench and light fixture used by the Commission throughout the Charles River Reservation.



The Metropolitan Parks System

In 1892, Frederick Law Olmsted and his young apprentice, Charles Eliot, proposed the creation of a Metropolitan Park System. Both men believed that people needed easy access to and contact with nature and open space in order to relax, unwind, and escape the daily pressure of city life. To that end, Eliot was assigned the task of developing a plan that would provide the growing city and its suburbs with scenery, parks and reservations to be held in perpetuity for the public's use and enjoyment.

Eliot's idea was to set aside beachfront along the bay, land along the Charles, Mystic and Neponset Rivers, and high ground throughout the Metropolitan area, and to turn this property into regional parks. He envisioned the creation of a series of parkways and roads built and maintained with aesthetics in mind, to make travel between the parks easy and attractive. By 1900 Eliot's design began to take shape as the state created the Metropolitan Parks Commission and placed with it 9,177 acres of reservations, 13 miles of ocean frontage, 56 miles of riverbank, and seven parkways. Since then, the system has grown.



attractive are being devised.

Nearly a century after Olmsted and Eliot's pioneering began, their vision remains strong, just as our Metropolitan Parks System remains vibrant.

The Commission acquired and preserved thousands of additional acres of parkland that fit into Olmsted and Eliot's original design. It also built new parks, skating rinks, swimming pools, athletic fields, band shells, and other recreational outlets. Even today, more property is being preserved, more historical sites are being restored, more ways to make the regional parks system safe, accessible and

For More Information Please Call 727-5215 Or Write To
20 Somerset St., Boston, MA 02108



Dedication

"This park," said Governor Michael S. Dukakis, "should be made to reflect the man after whom it is named. It should be a fond remembrance, full of grace, dignity and simple eloquence. Above all, it should be a modest place, a public domain."

With these words, on November 4, 1985, Governor Dukakis, along with Jacqueline Onassis, Caroline and John Kennedy Jr. and Senator Edward M. Kennedy broke ground on the Metropolitan District Commission's newest park and the Commonwealth's official memorial to the late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Eighteen months later, on what would have been the President's seventieth birthday, these same people, along with hundreds of others, returned to the site. This time they entered through granite gates to find grass, trees, benches, and paths; and in the center of the park, a fountain, a public oasis in honor of a native son. Inscribed on the gates and fountain were quotes selected by Caroline Kennedy in which her father asked Americans to be people of vision, compassion and peace.



**The Metropolitan District Commission
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Michael S. Dukakis, Governor
James S. Hoyte, Secretary of Environmental Affairs
William J. Geary, Commissioner
Associate Commissioners:**

**Ellen H. Anderson
Jovita Fontanez**

**William J. Jones
Dwight M. Scandrett**

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